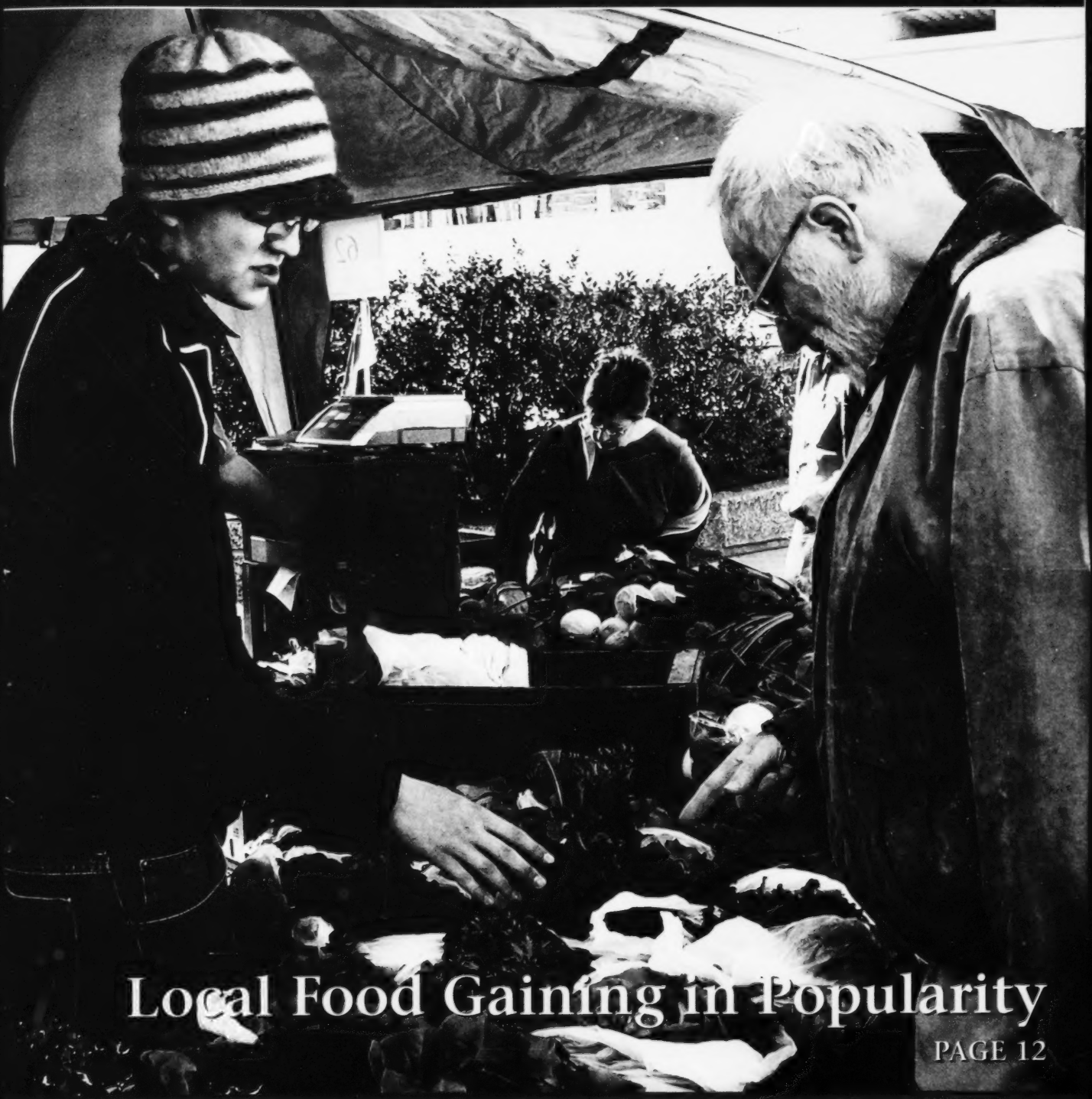
ISSUE 04

AGRIVIEW

MAY 2007 VOLUME 3



Local Food Gaining in Popularity

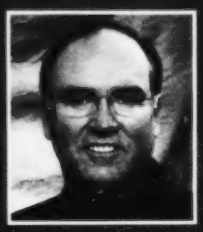
PAGE 12

ANTHRAX UPDATE PAGE 7

PESTICIDE RETURN PROGRAM PAGE 13

SRM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PAGE 14

Minister's Message



Last month, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation announced that it would refurbish 100 hopper cars to ensure that they will remain operational for the next 20 years. Providing these cars free of charge to farmers shipping to Western Canadian ports saves producers an estimated $4.50 per tonne. Work on this $1 million project will be completed by July of this year (see story, page 9).

Efficient grain movement is a critical issue for our producers. Unfortunately, serious challenges exist in the rail transportation system related to both the cost and level of service for transporting Saskatchewan crops.

The cost of rail transportation for our crops has risen steadily over the past several years. This has been accompanied by a corresponding drop in the level of service, particularly by CN, both in terms of the tonnage that may be moved on a monthly basis and the reliability and timeliness of the service provided.

For many farmers, the cost of rail transportation is their single largest production and marketing expense. Rail transportation deductions exceed $500 million annually, on average, for grains shipped from Saskatchewan.

Although freight rates are governed by regulation under a revenue cap that is determined annually by the Canadian Transport Agency, they are based on a formula that does not take into account cost reductions resulting from elevator and branch line consolidation. As a result, farmers are paying much more than the actual costs of rail movement, plus a reasonable return to capital (i.e. profit).

Because of a lack of competition, there is no pressure on the railways to reduce their rates to a level that more closely matches their cost of providing this service.

A lack of competition also means that railways are under no pressure to ensure that service levels are maintained or improved. This past winter was a difficult one for grain movement to the west coast, but not been an exceptionally problematic one (In terms of adverse weather in the mountains, for example). However, the railways fell behind early in the year in achieving targeted car unloads, and have simply been unable to catch up. One wonders what would happen if we had an exceedingly difficult year.

We know that the problems associated with delays in grain movement are costing Saskatchewan farmers money. We are also concerned that Canada's reputation as a reliable supplier of grain will be hurt – in fact, I heard this first-hand during my trade mission to Asia earlier this year.

Saskatchewan has long sought amendments to the Canadian Transportation Act which will foster a more competitive and cost-effective rail environment for the benefit of grain shippers. We will continue to pursue these issues, as well as current concerns relating to grain movement, with the federal government and with rail companies.

Mark Wartman
Minister, Agriculture and Food

CROP REPORTERS HONOURED FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Crop Reporters, from left: Marion Hardy; Allan Hardy; Don Payak; Charlotte Payak; Harvey Brooks; Charlotte Datchko; Edward Datchko; Larry Kuntz; Rita Kuntz; Emile Robin; Marie Robin

Seven crop reporters, who served as volunteers from 1982 to 2007 with the Crop Reporting Service sponsored by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) and the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, received 25-year service awards on March 8 at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building.

The honourees in attendance included: Don and Charlotte Payak, Weyburn; Allan and Marion Hardy, Grenfell; Edward and Charlotte Datchko, Ituna; and Emile and Marie Robin, Leask. Percy Schiele of Rapid View and Jim Hornford of Elfros were unable to attend. Past recipients Larry and Rita Kuntz were also present as they were unable to attend previous events.

The reporters began the day touring SAF's crop reporting unit. Later, the group toured the Saskatchewan Legislative Building and observed the Legislative Assembly from the Speaker's Gallery. They were introduced in the Legislature by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman. The tour ended with a lunch attended by Minister Wartman and senior officials of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.

"These crop reporters are recognized today for 25 years of volunteer service to Saskatchewan's agriculture industry," Wartman said during his introduction of the crop reporters to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. "For the past 25 years, they have volunteered their personal time during the crop season to collect information about crop development and precipitation in their rural municipalities, and we recognize the crop reporters here today for their commitment and dedication to the Saskatchewan crop reporting service."

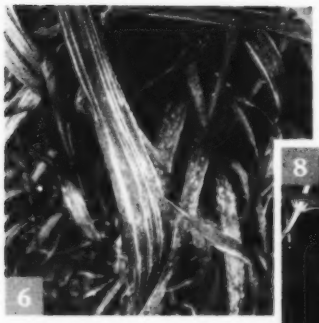
The purpose of the crop report is to provide timely and accurate information about the development of Saskatchewan crops to government, all Saskatchewan farmers, rural municipalities and the public.

Approximately 300 Saskatchewan farmers volunteer each year to work with the Crop Reporting Service.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

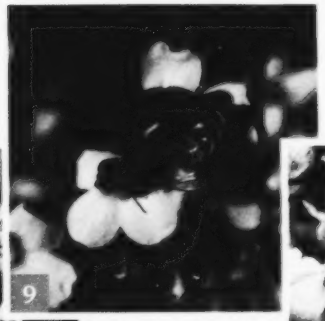
- If you have questions about the crop reporting service or if you are interested in becoming a crop reporter, please contact Terry Bedard, SAF, at 1-306-787-5956.
- To view the weekly crop report, visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca/ Statistics under Crops | Crop Report.

STORY SNAPSHOTS



Stripe rust in wheat can cause significant yield losses

Growing Haskap: a new fruit crop for the prairies



Honey bee colonies in the U.S. have been been dying at an alarming rate this winter

Chickpea research yields important findings

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AGRICULTURE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE 4

CROP DEVELOPMENT 8

MANAGEMENT 10

AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT 11

ENVIRONMENT 13

RESEARCH 13

FOOD SAFETY 14

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 15

EVENTS CALENDAR 16

Enjoying the Saskatoon Farmers' Market. Check for your local market opening
Photo courtesy Debby Claude.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

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To view this publication online, visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca/ProgramsServices.

SEED PLACED FERTILIZER

by David Larsen
Soil / Nutrient Management Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

The seed row is a good location to apply fertilizer, as long as the safe rates of seed placed fertilizer aren't exceeded. You can test the soil to determine which nutrients are deficient, and the amount of nutrients required to correct any deficiencies.

Fertilizer placed in or close to the seed row will ensure early access to required nutrients for the developing seedling. Early access to phosphorus is important for early vigour in cold, wet soils. As a mobile nutrient, nitrogen doesn't have to be close to the seed.

The safe amount of fertilizer that can be placed with the seed depends on the crop type, fertilizer type, moisture conditions, soil texture, the seedbed utilization and the quality of the seed. If safe rates are exceeded, you may encounter reduced germination and seedling vigour. Use a check strip to conclusively diagnose fertilizer damage, because other establishment problems can appear similar to fertilizer damage.

Consult the publication Farm Facts: Guidelines for the Safe Rates of Fertilizer Applied with the Seed for maximum rates of seed placed fertilizer under good to excellent seedbed moisture conditions.

Use alternative placement methods for fertilizer amounts in excess of the safe rates. A one-pass seeding system capable of separating the seed and fertilizer is ideal.

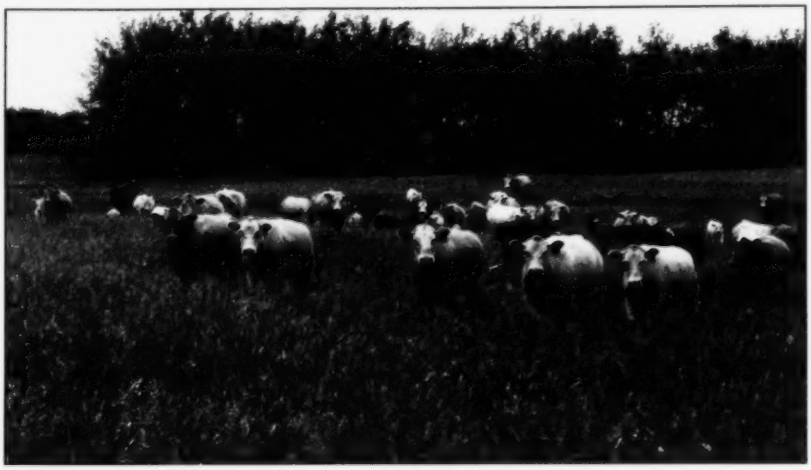
Some other options to consider include:

- Applying nitrogen fertilizer in a separate application with the starter phosphate applied in the seed row. For example:
  - use pre-seed banding of nitrogen with low disturbance openers; or
  - use post-emergent liquid nitrogen banding. Apply a safe rate of nitrogen and other nutrients at seeding, and dribble band additional nitrogen shortly after emergence.
- Using commercial fertilizer coatings to slow or delay the release of nitrogen from urea. Products such as Agrotain™ and ESN™ will slow or delay the amount of nitrogen that comes in contact with the developing seedling. See product label for application methods and guidelines.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Download Guidelines for the Safe Rates of Fertilizer Applied with the Seed from the SAF website, www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Production, under Fertilizer / Nutrients; or
- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Fertilizing pastures



by Andre Bonneau
Forage Conversion Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

Pastures are considered the most sustainable production systems in agriculture—mainly because nutrient cycling is maintained by forage production. Many of the nutrients consumed on pasture are returned to the pasture as urine and excrement. However, some nutrients are lost through volatilization, leaching, and erosion. The nutrients also leave with the weight gain on the grazing animal. The amount of nutrient lost depends, to a large extent, on the climate and health of the pasture.

The most common reaction to nutrient loss is to add fertilizer. Urea fertilizer, 46-0-0, is priced near $550 per tonne this spring. The exact return from adding urea fertilizer is complicated and full of variables, but we can expect to gain 10 to 40 kilograms of extra grass with every kilogram of nitrogen. One kilogram of actual nitrogen is priced at $1.20 ($550 per tonne urea) while one kilogram of dry grass is worth about $0.04 per kilogram standing ($38.50 per tonne or $35 per ton). Therefore, $1.20 worth of nitrogen will provide anywhere from $0.40 ($0.04 x 10 kg) to $1.60 ($0.04 x 40 kg) worth of extra grass.

Fertility doesn't have to come in the form of chemical fertilizer. Feeding on pasture during the dormant season or supplemental feeding during the grazing season can be an effective way to improve fertility. The feed waste also adds trash to the surface which is important in drought-proofing pasture. It's very important to get even manure distribution to get the most benefit from pasture feeding.

Adding perennial legumes such as alfalfa or cicer milkvetch to the pasture mixture adds to the fertility of the soil. The legume fixes its own nitrogen from the air and provides protein-rich forage to the grazing animal. The high quality forage adds to the quality of the manure and in turn provides more nitrogen to the plants.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

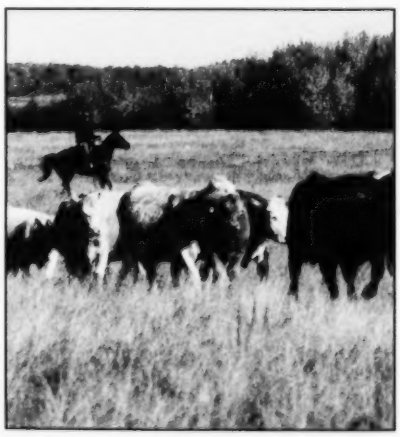
- Visit SAF's website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca; or
- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE PASTURE?

If you're a livestock producer and expect to have too much or too little pasture land this summer, remember to contact the Feed Grain and Forage Listing Service through the Agriculture Knowledge Centre.

This Internet service can help connect producers who need pasture with those who have pasture for rent.

Call the AKC at 1-866-457-2377 or log on to the SAF website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Programs and Services.



Forages in short term rotations

by Andre Bonneau
Forage Conversion Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

The two largest expenses in annual crop production are fertility and weed control. Fertilizer and pest control products account for between 60 and 70 per cent of variable expenses in cereal crop production. The figures are similar in oilseed production.

Forages can be used to alleviate some of those costs.

Forage crops add tremendous amounts of organic matter to the soil. Many perennial grasses and legumes have large root systems which increase the amount of organic matter in the soil. Increased organic matter provides nutrients and increases the water holding capacity of the soil. The root systems also open channels into the soil and can increase water percolation.

The roots of forages are very good at extracting nutrients from deeper soils. Annual crops make use of the top 12 to 18 inches (30 to 45 cm) of the soil surface. Forage crops can draw from the nutrients the annual crop can't access. Some of these nutrients will be accessible to future crops when the roots decompose. Perennial legumes can contribute a large amount of nitrogen to the soil in a relatively short time.

Annual and biennial weeds are stressed by perennial crops. The removal of the weed seeds at each harvest, coupled with the competition of a healthy forage stand, will reduce annual and biennial weed populations. Perennial weeds, however, can be a problem in forage stands.

For the forage to contribute to a crop rotation, the manager should have a plan to use this forage. Any benefit from the forage crop is lost if it doesn't have a financial value. Find a market for the forage before beginning, because the agronomic contributions alone won't justify the years of lost income.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- Visit SAF's website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca under Crops | Forages.

OPTIONS FOR SURFACE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

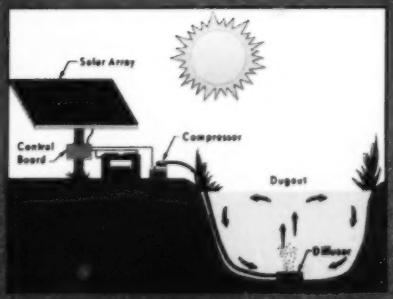
by Bob Klemmer, M Ag P Ag
Beef-Forage Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

People often assume that the quality of surface water, like that found in dugouts, springs, and dams, is always good, since snow and rainfall that fills it is, by nature, clean.

While it is generally true that rain and snow on the prairies is of high quality, once it hits the ground and starts moving through the soil, it picks up soil nutrients and contaminants. Soil based nutrients, like nitrogen, phosphate, and sulphur, leach into water travelling through the soil profile. These nutrients, which are also produced from direct access watering (urination and defecation), contribute to poor water quality and losses in cattle productivity during the growing season.

Several management practices, coupled with technologies for quality improvement, can take care of the most common problems associated with nutrient loading of surface water bodies.

Management techniques that limit nutrient loading will also limit the need for the use of more expensive treatment technologies.



Solar powered dugout aeration. Diagram courtesy of R. Stephen Murrell, AAFC - Regina

Seeding grass mixtures, like tap-rooted alfalfa, on waterways that feed dugouts, springs, or dams, can significantly reduce nutrient loading.

Installing remote watering stations, distributed through a pasture pipeline, can also significantly reduce the impact of water quality on cattle. When producers use remote watering, cattle will seldom water directly from the water source. Fencing of the dugout, spring or dam will avoid future animal impact, and eliminate the risk of animal injuries and losses from cattle getting stuck or drowning.

Treatment technologies often involve enhancing the effects of a biological process that Mother Nature provides. Installing a properly designed aeration system will, over time, help prevent problem algae growth during the growing season that can limit water intake and cattle performance. Aerated water reduces the re-suspension of nutrients at the bottom of the dugout that feeds spring and summer algae and toxic cyanobacteria blooms.

A build-up of salt levels, specifically sulphates, as signified by increasing Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) or conductivity, is also common, especially in hot, dry years. High sulphate water can severely affect the health and productivity of cattle. Traditional treatment technologies like nano-filtration and reverse osmosis, used to reduce sulphate levels, can be costly and require significant maintenance.

Fortunately, a biologically based research and development study, funded by PFRA at the Western Beef Development Centre in Lanigan, shows promise as a future economical method for sulphate removal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Stripe rust in wheat

Figure 1. Stripe rust infection in wheat. Photo courtesy of B. McCallum, AAFC-Winnipeg

by Penny Pearse
Provincial Plant Disease Specialist
SAF

There is a new wheat leaf disease that farmers should be on the lookout for in 2007. The disease is stripe rust, and it can result in yield losses of 10 to 70 per cent in susceptible varieties. Stripe rust has been on the increase in wheat production regions since 2000, but wasn't considered prevalent in Saskatchewan until last year. Surveys have found stripe rust to be most common in south-east and east-central regions, but observations have been made as far as the north-west region.

Although stripe rust is not a new disease, it was limited to cooler climates (Pacific Northwest), and so was previously not a disease of concern for wheat breeding programs on the Canadian prairies. However, new races of the fungus have evolved that are adapted to the moderate summer temperatures on the prairies. As for all rust diseases, stripe rust spores do not typically over-winter this far north, instead arriving on wind currents from rust-infested cereal regions in the United States. However, it was believed that the stripe rust fungus over-wintered in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan during the 2005/06 winter, which is why the disease was observed earlier and had more time to develop in 2006 compared to previous years.

Provincial specialists will be monitoring the stripe rust situation and will provide bulletins during the 2007 growing season.

Stripe rust can be identified as small orange-yellow coloured pustules forming in vertical lines along wheat leaves (Figure 1). Not all varieties are susceptible. Refer to the 2007 Varieties of Grain Crops for stripe rust ratings. If you are growing a susceptible variety, it is important to scout your field for early symptom development and to apply a foliar fungicide if stripe rust is evident on most of the plants prior to flag leaf emergence. Refer to the 2007 Guide to Crop Protection for fungicides registered for rusts in cereals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- E-mail aginfo@agr.gov.sk.ca.

DISEASE SCOUTING IN PULSE CROPS

by Penny Pearse
Provincial Plant Disease Specialist
SAF

Farmers are very busy this time of year, but there is one more item they should add to their to-do list. June is the time to begin scouting for disease symptoms in pulse crops. Identifying a disease early allows time to make a decision regarding foliar fungicide application, before disease can get a foothold in the crop and cause economic loss.

Some well-planned scouting can determine how to get the most efficient use of a fungicide. Tiny microscopic organisms cause disease. By the time large-scale symptoms can be seen during a quick drive-by, it may be too late to take action, as the damage is already done.

It is important to increase scouting frequency if moist conditions prevail. Most pulse crop diseases thrive and spread during warm weather with frequent rain showers.

CHICKPEA: Early scouting and diagnosis is especially important for ascochyta blight in chickpea, as it is a very aggressive disease. Begin scouting at the seedling stage and scout every three to seven days depending on disease risk. Research and grower experience have shown that a preventative fungicide application at the seven-node stage is important to reduce disease risk for the season. Some varieties (e.g. B-90, CDC Frontier, desi types) have better disease resistance and fungicide applications can be more strategic, after the initial fungicide application. However, for the older susceptible varieties, growers must remain diligent in scouting their crops for new symptoms, and may have to apply fungicides repeatedly.

LENTIL: The main diseases to watch for in lentil are ascochyta blight and anthracnose. Begin scouting at the vegetative stage, as the optimal time for fungicide control of lentil diseases is from the 10-12 node stage to the mid-flowering stage. Usually, one well-timed fungicide application is sufficient for controlling lentil diseases. Fungicides are not usually necessary in dry seasons or in lentil canopies that remain open.

FIELD PEA: The main diseases to watch for in field pea are powdery mildew and the ascochyta blights. Begin scouting at the early bloom stage and scout until pod fill. The optimal time for fungicide application in field pea is from early to mid-flower. Only those field pea varieties that are susceptible to powdery mildew and ascochyta are likely to show an economic response to a fungicide application.

It is not possible to predict how severe diseases will be in 2007 because risk can change daily according to rainfall events. If a pulse grower has used an integrated approach to managing diseases (e.g. resistant varieties, disease-free seed, crop rotation), then he or she will not need to rely solely on fungicides. As the growing season continues, farmers will need to keep their ears on the weather forecast and their eyes on their crop.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit [redacted] under Diseases
  Title: Identification and Management of Lentil Diseases: FAQs; or
- Visit [redacted] under Diseases
  Title: Ascochyta Blight in Chickpea Foliar Fungicide Applications
- Visit [redacted] under Diseases
  Title: Field Scouting Tips for Ascochyta Blight of Chickpea - FAQs; or
- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- E-mail [redacted]

Anthrax: still a threat

by Dr. Mary VanderKop
Surveillance Veterinarian
Animal Health Unit
SAF

If you thought the anthrax outbreak of 2006 was unique, you might want to consider how similar the environmental circumstances in your area are to those last year. The situations that predict anthrax outbreaks include drought or spring flooding followed by drought. The southwest area of Saskatchewan is poised for severe drought this year, and many west central areas will be flooded. Anthrax spores are present in the soil throughout the province, and the risk of disease is especially high in areas that were affected last year.

A vaccine for anthrax is available and affordable. Herds that are at risk should be vaccinated, even if they had vaccine last year. Don't be caught short this year. While the immunity should last six to 12 months, there are many factors that influence this. Vaccinated cattle were affected with anthrax this past winter, likely from spores in contaminated feed, so immunity can be overwhelmed when animals are exposed to a large number of spores. The peak season for anthrax is late summer, so it is critical that cattle be vaccinated before then, and that calves born this spring also receive vaccine. Consult your veterinarian for specific vaccination advice.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) and the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan sponsored four public education meetings on anthrax in April. The Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) presented updates on the anthrax outbreak of 2006, along with information on the disease and control policies. The CFIA and WCVM researchers will be investigating herds this year to evaluate how long immunity from vaccines persists in field situations. They will also evaluate whether there is background immunity from natural exposure in Saskatchewan herds. Any livestock producers who are interested in participating can contact the Animal Health Unit of SAF (306-787-2150), and we will put you in touch with the researchers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- E-mail agrinfo@agr.gov.sk.ca

ENROL NOW FOR PASTURE SCHOOL

by Al Foster, P.Ag
Forage Development Specialist
SAF

The fifth annual Saskatchewan Pasture School, organized by the Saskatchewan Forage Council, will take place June 13 and 14 in Saskatoon. Producers considering attendance at this year's school should apply soon.

"Attendance at the Pasture School is limited to 50 participants. We limit our enrolment so that we have enough resource people during the hands-on field exercises to provide one-on-one interaction," says Al Foster, SAF Forage Development specialist and member of the organizing committee.

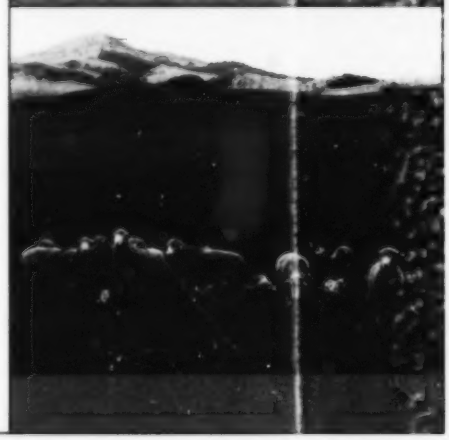
This year's agenda includes sessions on grazing management principles, annual forages, herd health concerns on pasture, and a producer's perspective on grazing legumes, as well as field tours discussing tame and native pasture assessment, plant identification and forage selection.

"Through these classroom sessions, field exercises, producer presentations and panel discussions, the Pasture School also provides participants plenty of opportunity to gain practical knowledge to expand their pasture management skills," Foster says.

The Pasture School is a joint project of the Saskatchewan Forage Council, the Western Beef Development Centre, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Ducks Unlimited, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada/Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the Saskatchewan Forage Council at 306-966-2148; or
- Visit Sask Forage online at [redacted]



SPRING UPDATE TO CROP PROTECTION GUIDE AVAILABLE

by Clark Brenzil
Provincial Weed Control Specialist
SAF

The Guide to Crop Protection, produced annually by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF), is an excellent single source of information that producers can look to when deciding which pesticides to use when tackling weeds, diseases and insects in their crops and forage stands.

Each spring, an update to the Guide to Crop Protection is produced to provide information on new crop protection products or new uses of existing products that have been registered since the release of the printed publication in early January.

The printed 2007 Saskatchewan Guide to Crop Protection is available at no cost from participating retailers of crop protection products.

The spring update to the 2007 Guide to Crop Protection is available on May 1, 2007:

- on the SAF web site at www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Production under Insects, Weeds, or Diseases; or
- by calling the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Growing Haskap

A new fruit crop for the prairies

by Clarence Peters
Fruit Specialist
SAF

WHAT IS HASKAP?

Haskap may not sound like a tasty, colourful and healthy fruit. However, in Japan, haskap, (also spelled hascup, haskaap or hasukappu) is the blue honeysuckle, Lonicera caerulea, and one of the country's favourite fruits. The plant circles the polar regions across the northern hemisphere, with native subspecies growing in Saskatchewan. Fruit breeders at the University of Saskatchewan began a breeding program in 1998, and are releasing their best selections this spring. Yields are expected to be approximately three to six kg/bush (six to 12 lb. per shrub).

WHY GROW HASKAP?

Blue honeysuckle is a healthy fruit. It is a good source of Vitamin C (50-70 mg/kg) and, like other dark berries, it is high in antioxidants. The plant is a dwarf shrub, ideal for prairie culture. It is easy to harvest, requiring little training or pruning. It is winter hardy (-47°C), as well as drought resistant, and thrives in most prairie soil types. Bumble bees are required for cross pollination, as the plant flowers so early in the spring that honeybees are not reliable. Most importantly, blue honeysuckle has no serious insect or disease pests in Saskatchewan, so it lends itself well to organic culture. Birds, however, especially cedar waxwings, are a serious problem. Consequently, protective netting systems will definitely be required.

WHAT ABOUT THE MARKETS?

Honeysuckle is the first fruit to mature (mid June). It is very useful and attractive for local U-Pick markets and versatile for processing. However, this is not the major attraction. Japan, with 125 million people, has lost its arable fruit acres to urban development, and is looking for other sources of supply for its expanding market. After testing our Haskap samples, Japanese researchers and other interested individuals visited the University of Saskatchewan and provincial growers in 2006 to discuss future development and marketing plans. Saskatchewan producers are organizing and preparing to supply the market.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Clarence C. Peters, Fruit Development Specialist, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, at 1-306-787-4666; or
- Visit the Haskap producers' website at www.haskap.ca.
  The site also includes links to the U of S Fruit Program, the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association (SFGA), and production information.

SASKATCHEWAN FIBRE IN DEMAND, NATURALLY!

by Shannon Chant
Crop Development Specialist
North Battleford
SAF

Several Saskatchewan groups are joining together to tell the world about natural fibres.

As part of the Saskatchewan indemand 2007 trade show to be held September 14-16 at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon, Fibre indemand, Naturally! will showcase, at their booth, fibre from a number of Saskatchewan sources including sheep, alpaca, llama, and flax. Differences in methods of obtaining and processing the fibre, whether from plant or animal, will be explained. Saskatchewan artisans from the Saskatchewan Spinners and Weavers will demonstrate ways to use each fibre. A number of displays will be available to give a hands-on experience with many types of fibre.

Representatives from Biolin Research Inc., Crop Fibres Canada, Agricultural and Bioresource Engineering (SAF chair) from the U of S, and the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission will staff a

number of booths telling the story of flax fibre – from the grower's field to the processor to the end product. Flax fibre can be used for a wide range of products including clothing, flooring, building materials and reinforcing composites for transportation, commercial and household applications, and bedding materials for animals.

The Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board, Saskatchewan Alpaca Breeders Network and Saskatchewan Llama Association will provide information on the differences between shearing each type of animal and the variety of fibre types that are available from the various parts of an animal, ranging from the functional to the exquisite high end fashion fibres.

Saskatchewan retailers such as Shepherds' Cottage Wool from Zehner, SK, will also be on hand to demonstrate the wide range of fibre products that are already available to us in our own backyard.

Information will also be available about fibre workshops and courses, fibre producers and fibre processors.

Join us at Fibre indemand, Naturally! and Saskatchewan indemand and enjoy the experiences, information and products that Saskatchewan can offer!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Saskatchewan indemand at www.saskatoonex.com/indemand/indemand_index.html, or;
- Contact Fibre indemand, Naturally! at Crop Fibers Canada, 306-955-4506; or
- E-mail info@cropfiberscanada.ca

Save our pollinators

by John Gruszka
Provincial Specialist
Apiculture
SAF

Over the last 60 years, the number of native pollinators has been declining because of the advent of larger farms, loss of natural habitat, and the growing use of pesticides. Consequently, honey bees have become increasingly more important pollinators for field and fruit crops (to assist in increasing yields), as well as pollinators of the natural vegetation to maintain a healthy and diverse ecosystem.

Lately, large numbers of honey bee colonies in the United States (U.S.) have been dying over winter at an alarming rate, which is threatening the yields and productivity of over $15 billion of crop production that is dependent on honey bee pollination. The cause of these losses has yet to be determined.

Each year, a variety of insect pests may increase in populations and need to be controlled to maintain crop yields and profitability. Last year, a significant number of canola fields needed to be protected from Bertha army worm infestations, and the forecast for the summer of 2007 is that there may be significant acres that may need to be protected from wheat midge damage.

Bees play an important role in increasing the yields of field crops (canola, sweet clover, red clover, borage, alfalfa, etc.) and horticultural crops (pumpkins, fruit orchards, etc.) in Saskatchewan's fields and gardens. Foraging bees that are exposed to insecticides in the field die quickly, either in the field or in front of the hives. More than half of the population of a colony can be lost due to insecticide poisoning, destroying the pollination benefits and severely impacting honey production.

Foraging bees that are exposed to insecticides in the field die quickly, either in the field or in front of the hives.

Most bee poisonings can occur in the following ways:

- Application of insecticides to crops in bloom.
- Spray drift onto flowering crops or apiaries.
- Contamination of flowering weeds in target fields.

Damage to bees can be minimized with the following precautions:

- Contact beekeepers in your area to advise them (48 hours ahead if possible) of your intentions to spray.
- Spray late in the evening, or very early in the morning when bees are not flying, to avoid direct contact on foraging bees.
- Choose the least hazardous insecticide or formulation when possible.
- Do not spray over apiaries or allow spray to drift onto adjacent blooming crops.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Refer to the Guide to Crop Protection available at www.agr.gov.sk/Production under Insects for information on reducing the risk to bees when using insecticides for crop pests; or
- Call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

MANAGEMENT

REPAINTING OF PROVINCIAL HOPPER CARS ANNOUNCED

The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation (SGCC) is refurbishing approximately 100 of its hopper cars this year, to ensure they remain operational over the next 23 years.

This is the first time the cars have been repainted since the SGCC hopper car fleet was built in 1981. Work on the $1 million project will be complete by July 31, 2007.

The hopper cars are being painted green. Decals include a golden yellow stripe representing the wheat and canola fields of Saskatchewan, and the province's floral emblem, the prairie lily. The Saskatchewan! wordmark runs across the length of the car.

"The repainting of the hopper cars will insure that farmers will continue to benefit from the Saskatchewan hopper cars for years to come," Minister for the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Eldon Lautermilch said.

2007 crop insurance program features refined unseeded acreage calculations

by Trilby Henderson
Communications Branch
SCIC

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance has refined the Unseeded Acreage feature of its 2007 Crop Insurance program to better target the deductible and reduce its impact on claims. For 2007, the five per cent deductible will only be applied on quarter sections where there are acres too wet to seed, rather than on a whole farm basis as was done in the past.

The Unseeded Acreage feature provides a $50 per acre payment to farmers who are unable to seed on or before June 20 due to excessive spring moisture. This feature is available to all eligible Crop Insurance customers as part of their multi-peril contract of insurance. If a producer chooses to insure using the crop insurance weather programs only, they are not eligible for unseeded acreage compensation.

The five per cent deductible is applied to all unseeded acreage claims. The program is not intended to pay for the normal year-to-year variations in seeded acres; the first five per cent of acres below those normally seeded are considered to be normal year-to-year variations.

Payments are determined by using the customer's individual historical seeding and insurance intensities. By using this calculation, Crop Insurance can ensure that the Unseeded Acreage feature compensates only for acres that are normally seeded, that producers who insure more are not disadvantaged, and that the feature does not pay for acres never intended for insurance. Once a claim has been paid, the payable acres are included as "seeded" when calculating the producer's annual seeding intensity for the year.

Producers wishing to register a claim must request an inspection from Crop Insurance before June 25. Reporting acres on a Seeded Acreage Report is not enough to trigger a claim.

A claim may be reduced or denied if the customer's loss is significantly greater than other producers in their immediate area due to their management practices. This provision maintains a fair program by preventing program abuse and ensuring every premium dollar collected goes to farmers who experience uncontrollable losses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To view an example of how an Unseeded Acreage claim is calculated, visit the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance website at www.saskcropinsurance.com and select the Unseeded Acreage link under Programs.

  Crop Insurance staff are available to answer any questions you may have regarding this or any other aspect of the 2007 Crop Insurance Program, and can be contacted at any of the customer service offices throughout the province or by calling 1-888-935-0000.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CUSTOM HIRING

by Ralph Howes
Production Economics Specialist
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

Custom hiring is a business arrangement. The terms of the arrangement should be written in a formal agreement. If unwritten, the terms are more likely to be misunderstood in case of a dispute.

The following should be considered in a custom hiring agreement.

- **TIMELINESS:** Significant losses can occur if an operation is not started or completed on time. To facilitate planning, a custom hiring agreement should include a schedule of operations for both parties. For example, when the custom combiner is picking up swathed grain, the schedule would outline time periods for swathing by the owner and combining by the custom operator. Such a schedule would be subject to weather conditions and crop maturity.

- **OPERATIONS:** The parties should write into the agreement the exact operations to be performed by each party, and the machine, materials and labour to be supplied by each.

- **RATE SCHEDULE:** The custom operator should stipulate the rate for each operation to be performed on the basis of acreage, time (hour, day, and week), or total operation performed.

- **MANAGEMENT:** A custom hiring agreement should ensure that the custom operator will employ acceptable management practices in his/her operations.

- **TERMS OF PAYMENT:** A custom hiring agreement should stipulate terms of payment for custom operations. The custom operator should also bill the client upon the completion of each custom operation. The bill should indicate actual units (hours, acres, etc.) completed, the rate charged per unit, the total charge and the date payment is due.

- **TERMINATION:** A minimum period for notice of termination should be included in a custom hiring agreement. A penalty should be stipulated for unjustified termination within the term of the agreement.

- **INSURANCE:** A custom operator may be considered differently than a farmer when insuring. It is advised that this point be clarified with the insurance company if one is considering doing custom work or renting equipment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Download The Farm Machinery Custom and Rental Rate Guide from the SAF website, www.agr.gov.sk.ca/Management under Financial Planning; or
- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Sask. value-added producers starting to carve their own niche at trade shows

by Darryl McCallum
Business Investment Strategist
SAF

Saskatchewan is known as one of the best producers of agricultural products on the planet—billions of dollars in commodity sales attest to that fact. Our value-added producers play an increasingly important role in that picture, and are showing up at some of the major food marketplaces in the world with products that have enough differentiation from the competition that we are starting to carve out a distinctive market share.

A case in point is the recent SIAL food marketplace, which took place in Montreal from March 27 - 30, 2007. SIAL started in Paris, but now hosts regular food marketplaces around the world, including events in China and Venezuela in the near future. At these shows, the various players in the food sector have the opportunity to meet in a business context to foster commercial exchanges. In Montreal, SIAL offered North American producers access to international markets, and offered international producers access to the food products, wines, beverages and spirits of the North American market.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food was at SIAL to assess and follow up on the reported interest in investment in this province. The physical size of SIAL is huge. The building hosting the event—the Palais de Congress—is 200,000 square feet. There were approximately 750 exhibitors from 40 countries in the display marketplace, and over 18,000 agri-food professionals from 80 countries were in attendance. Saskatchewan was represented by 11 companies and food-related associations. Interest was expressed in both the products on display and in the opportunities for investment in Saskatchewan. A number of leads will be pursued with regard to the establishment of new operations in the province, and a number of contacts have been passed along to existing companies for the purposes of exploring potential joint ventures.

Saskatchewan's presence and logistical co-ordination was managed by the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP). STEP also had a booth and provided space to companies who were testing the marketplace.

Highlights of the show included pre-arranged meetings with pre-qualified clients; discussions on the marketplace floor; a seminar on "the Saskatchewan Advantage," and presentations by, and dialogues with, senior trade representatives from the major Canadian embassies and consulates around the world. Saskatchewan and Manitoba jointly hosted a networking reception for key selected government and business leaders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Darryl McCallum, SAF, at 306-787-6154.

2007 BREI CONFERENCE:
THINKING REGIONALLY—SUCCEEDING GLOBALLY

BREI
Business Retention & Expansion International

by Lori St. Dennis
Manager
Agri-Business Development Branch

The 2007 Business Retention and Expansion International (BREI) Conference will be held in Regina from June 4 to 8. This four-day event features an array of keynote speakers, breakout sessions and workshops.

The conference emphasizes the importance of developing "an economy of regions," where businesses and communities co-operate regionally to compete globally. This shift to regional thinking requires communities to regard each other as economic partners that can leverage resources, build critical mass and support one another in their efforts to prosper. The training and best practices shared at the conference will provide participants with the necessary tools to retain and expand regional assets and businesses.

The conference themes include building on competitive advantages, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, and engaging leadership and effective governance. Growing businesses seek out communities that have a strategic advantage, which includes human resources, technology, physical infrastructure and the quality of life that a rural community offers.

A keynote speaker at the conference is Wisconsin author Rebecca Ryan, who was the recipient of the 2004 Entrepreneur of the Year award by the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Ryan will share her experiences of working with communities to engage and retain the next generation of community leaders by creating an appealing environment that attracts youth.

Another keynote speaker, identified in Maclean's magazine as one of the "Top 40 Under 40," is Murad al Katib with Saskcan Pulse Limited. al Katib is a successful Saskatchewan entrepreneur who will speak on the importance of recognizing and identifying local market opportunities for products and services that are in demand worldwide.

James Gollub

Speaker James Gollub will share his insights on the importance of community collaboration to achieve regional economic advantages through customers, producers and suppliers connecting to build relationships that add value. Revitalizing a local community involves local initiatives, collaboration and embracing the philosophy that it is possible to grow from within the community. Moving forward requires that regions develop a plan that puts their competitive advantages to work by bringing together like-minded stakeholders to devise and initiate a development strategy for economic growth based on the region's opportunities.

The BREI Conference provides a great opportunity to hear from internationally renowned experts who have invaluable expertise and insights to share with conference participants. In addition to the great list of speakers, there will also be a tradeshow at the event. Early bird registration will take place on May 4.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Lori St. Dennis, Manager, Agri-Business Development Branch, SAF at 1-306-787-8524; or
- Visit the conference website at www.brei.org.

Increasing interest in locally grown foods

by Don Perrault
Agri-Business Development Specialist
SAF

Canadian consumers are showing increasing interest in buying locally grown food. This trend is good news from the perspective of both the local agricultural economy and the environment.

A Canada-wide Ipsos-Reid survey completed in December 2006 confirms this trend. When Canadians were asked to identify the benefits of buying locally grown fruits and vegetables, the most common responses were that it helps the local economy (71%), that it supports family farmers (70%), that local food tastes better (53%) and that local food is cheaper (50%). Some less common responses were that local fruit and vegetables are not genetically modified (48%), are healthier (46%), do not contain chemical and synthetic pesticides (45%) and are safer (41%). Similar responses were given when questioned about locally raised meat in comparison to "regular" fresh meat.

Today, the consumer appears to be more concerned about food safety, food security and food traceability. They are also concerned about the environment and the distance that food has to travel before it gets to their plates. The trend of buying locally helps to address most of these concerns.

Farmers' markets provide an excellent venue for selling locally grown produce, and allow non-farm folks to rub shoulders with producers. Farmers' markets can provide economic benefits to the communities that have them, as well as to the local farm economy. With the exception of the major cities, most markets in the province are small and have yet to reach their full potential.

So how can Saskatchewan producers benefit from this trend? Saskatchewan doesn't have a large population base to sell to, and much of the land base is far from larger population centres. Some organizations in the province, such as CHEP (Child Hunger and Education Program) in Saskatoon, do a good job of linking producer and city families in an alternative market. The University of Regina's "Local Food Directory" works like an online farmers market. Initiated by Dr. Daryl Hepting, this directory allows producers to post their products and list their contact information. This directory can be viewed at http://lofo.uregina.ca.

The Internet is an excellent tool which can be used for marketing locally and abroad. Through the use of this tool and by working collaboratively, Saskatchewan families are provided with a variety of options to meet their interest in both healthy products and lifestyles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Don Perrault at the Prince Albert Regional Office at 306-953-2361.

PROVINCE HELPS PRODUCERS TO SECURE WATER SUPPLIES

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is providing a one-time grant of $1 million to assist producers in drought-prone areas of the province to develop secure water supplies. These funds will be issued with the assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's PFRA.

"Drought has been an ongoing concern for producers in a number of regions of the province," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. "We recognize the difficulties producers have had in securing adequate water supplies, and we are pleased to be able to provide assistance to producers in order to secure water sources and mitigate the effects of drought."

Parts of southwest Saskatchewan, and many more localized regions of the province, experienced drought conditions in 2006, resulting in some producers experiencing water shortages.

Applicants will be eligible for cost-share grants for on-farm water developments such as wells, dugouts and pasture pipelines. Grants will be allocated on a first-come, first-served, basis and projects must meet program construction standards to qualify for cost-sharing. The program will be first targeted to the 34 rural municipalities in the southwest that were

designated as eligible for the federal tax deferral for drought induced sale of livestock.

Application forms are available from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food and PFRA offices in the designated areas.

- Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) will provide $1 million in support of water development projects.
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration will administer the program.
- Funds will first be directed to the 34 rural municipalities (RMs) in the southwest that were designated as eligible for federal tax deferral for drought induced sale of livestock.
- Remaining funds will be directed province-wide to support water development projects that address drought-related water shortages.

Eligible projects include:

- Large-diameter wells, pasture pipelines and dugouts that were completed in 2006 in the designated 34 RMs that did not receive PFRA funding, will be eligible for one-third cost-share, to a maximum of $5,000. The $5,000 maximum will not be applied in the case of small diameter wells.
- Small-diameter wells completed in 2006 anywhere in the province that did receive cost-sharing from PFRA will be eligible for a top-up grant from the provincial program to meet the full one-third over-all cost share.
- The remaining funds will be used to provide a top-up to the PFRA program for small-diameter wells throughout the province, to the full one-third combined cost-share.
- All projects must meet PFRA's construction criteria.
- PFRA and SAF will co-ordinate contact with potential 2006 applications.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact SAF at 787-4325

Successful stewardship program returns to Saskatchewan

by Wayne Gosselin, P. Ag
Environmental Policy Analyst
SAF

A program to collect and safely dispose of unwanted and obsolete agricultural pesticides will return to Saskatchewan in 2007. Collection dates are planned for Oct. 23-25.

The last collection in Saskatchewan occurred in three phases in 1999, 2000 and 2001. More than 156,000 kilograms of obsolete pesticides were collected.

This year, the program will be run as a province-wide blitz. Agricultural producers will be able to dispose of outdated, unusable and/or no longer registered agricultural crop protection products by delivering them to a number of participating agricultural retailers across the province during the three-day collection period.

Unwanted and obsolete agricultural herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides are welcomed at participating agricultural retailers, but other products, such as antifreeze, solvents, paints, and treated seed will not be accepted.

Details of the program, including a list of collection sites, will be publicized through an extensive advertising and direct mail campaign closer to the collection dates. Agricultural dealers across the province will be provided with a list of collection sites and additional information to assist farmers in identifying obsolete products.

The program is funded in Saskatchewan by CropLife Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Partners assisting with the program are agricultural retailers, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, and Saskatchewan Environment.

Under CropLife Canada's mandate of "working responsibly to protect people and the environment," the initiative is operated at no cost to farmers.

"We are pleased to be part of a program that provides farmers with a safe, effective and cost-free way to properly dispose of unwanted products," CropLife Canada Vice President of Stewardship Cam Davreux said. "This program is a great example of how government, grower organizations and industry can work co-operatively towards a better environment."

This is a one-time opportunity with no legal

implications or cost to producers. Producers are not required to identify themselves. All pesticides will be accepted, including those without valid Canadian Pest Control Act numbers. But, for safety reasons, all containers must be labelled.

"Please make sure containers are leak-free and a pesticide name is written on every container," Davreux said. "If you no longer know what the pesticide is, write the words 'Pesticide Unknown' in large letters on the container."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Ask your farm supply dealer;
- Phone the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- See SAF's website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca.

CHICKPEA RESEARCH YIELDS IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The results of a research project aimed at finding ways to reduce producer costs for growing chickpeas came to one overwhelming conclusion: don't cheap out on fungicide application.

The research was conducted over a three-year period by Wheatland Conservation Area Inc., a non-profit producer-run organization in Swift Current. Funding for the project was provided by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF), through its Agriculture Development Fund, and the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Association.

Bryan Nybo, the Farm Manager for the Wheatland group, says the intent of the study was to improve the bottom lines of producers.

"Producers in southwestern Saskatchewan have been growing chickpeas for a number of years with good financial success. In many cases, this gave farmers the economic boost they needed to make their operations viable," said Nybo.

However, with the advancement of ascochyta, a disease common to chickpeas, and lower chickpea prices, Nybo says producers were losing this economic advantage.

"In order to help them regain these advantages, we wanted to look at ways for producers to adequately manage the disease risk while, at the same time, reducing the production costs associated with this crop," he stated.

Ascochyta blight in chickpeas

Experimenting with both Sanford and CDC Yuma chickpea varieties, Wheatland examined four different avenues for lowering production costs: seeding rates, fertilizer rates, row spacing, and fungicide application.

The largest treatment effect observed in the study dealt with crop variety. There was much lower disease pressure and much higher yield in CDC Yuma chickpeas compared to Sanford. However, according to Nybo, only one of the four variables studied produced a big effect on the bottom line. "Our main finding was that if you try to cut down in your fungicides, you're in big trouble," he said.

"The main risk to chickpeas is ascochyta. Controlling that risk proved to be the overwhelming factor in the whole project. We found that, as soon as you try to cut down on fungicide, you were really increasing your exposure."

Nybo says fungicide can be a large cost to producers, particularly when they have to spray several times during the crop year. "At $20 or $25 per acre per application, it gets to be quite a bit."

Nybo feels the best bet for making chickpea production more profitable for farmers may be more research, specifically in developing new varieties. He says the Crop Development Centre (CDC) at the University of Saskatchewan has been producing terrific results in improving disease resistance in chickpeas.

"The task can be pretty difficult and time-consuming, but some of the chickpea varieties out now are much, much better than what we've seen in the past, going to the fern-type leaf rather than the unifoliate-type leaf, which seems to have a big advantage."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

Canada-Sask specified risk material (SRM) management program

by Garth Lipinski
Senior Livestock Analyst
Economic and Commodity Analysis
SAF

Last summer, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced enhancements to Canada's feed ban in an attempt to strengthen Canada's safeguards against the spread of BSE and to speed its eradication.

The new regulations require all Specified Risk Material (SRM) tissues to be removed and excluded from use in all animal feed, pet food and fertilizer and disposed of in a manner approved by the CFIA by July 12, 2007.

Funding will be available for investment in one-time infrastructure development projects specifically related to SRM handling and disposal.

The goal is to create feasible short and long term environmentally safe SRM disposal options across Saskatchewan to reduce the cost of industry adaptation to the new CFIA regulation.

Program assistance will be available to a person, corporation, communal organization or Indian band operating in Saskatchewan, including:

- CFIA approved SRM disposal facilities;
- Federally inspected beef slaughter or processing facilities;
- Domestically inspected beef slaughter or processing facilities;
- Health licensed beef slaughter or processing facilities; and
- Other approved facilities required to comply with the regulation.

Eligible projects include:

- Program assistance will be available for new, or modifications to existing, infrastructure for a CFIA approved SRM disposal facility or a licensed packing plant to meet the requirements of the new feed ban regulations.
- Projects that could be eligible include: modifications to beef slaughter and processing facilities to accommodate SRM segregation and storage; landfills; composting; rendering; incineration; gasification; alkaline/thermal hydrolysis; bio-digestion; and other projects that create value from SRM, such as energy generation.

Expenditures that are eligible under the program include:

- Project planning, design, engineering and environmental assessments.
- Construction, machinery, equipment and other capital items dedicated to removal, separation, storage, transportation, rendering, containment or destruction of SRM.
- Up to 25 per cent of purchase cost for qualified motorized mobile equipment necessary to handle or dispose of SRM may be eligible, but will not be included in a final prorated payment if funding is available.

Ineligible expenses include:

- Land.
- Capital items not specifically related to SRM handling or disposal.
- Financing costs or production staff salaries.

Assistance levels are up to 50 per cent of eligible project expenditures to a maximum of:

- $100,000 - health licensed plants;
- $1 million - domestically inspected plants;
- $3 million - federally inspected plants;
- $1 million - CFIA approved SRM disposal facilities.
- A final prorated payment of up to an additional 40 per cent of eligible project costs may be issued if total payments are less than total program funds available.

Eligible expenditures include those made on approved projects between December 14, 2004 and March 31, 2009. The application deadline is December 31, 2008. Application forms will be available shortly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food at 306-787-4325 or 306-787-5947.

FOOD SAFETY

TRACEABILITY: AN INTEGRAL PART OF TODAY'S MEAT INDUSTRY

by Ken Evans
Agri-Business Development Specialist
SAF

Western Prime Meat Processors is a provincially inspected meat processor in Weyburn employing 16 people. The fully operational plant held its first slaughter on September 14, 2005, and is currently slaughtering approximately 60 head a week with a goal of reaching 100 to 150 head per week. They have slaughtered and processed cattle (cows, bulls and steers), hogs, sheep, lamb, bison and elk.

The plant's owners, in collaboration with their customers and suppliers, believe an opportunity exists to add value throughout the entire supply chain by creating a unique or different product from those currently in the marketplace. Their goal is to be able to trace all plant products from the primary livestock producer through their own facility and on to the final food/meat retailer. Western Prime Meat Processors calls this traceability feature their "Pasture to Plate" concept.

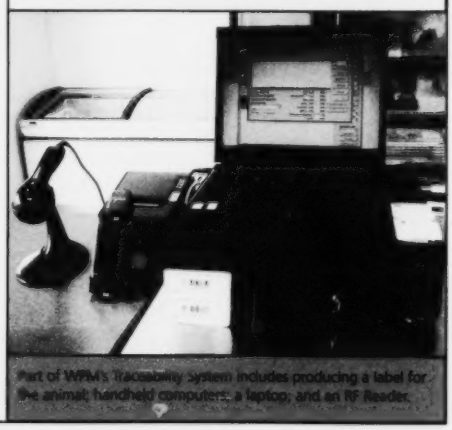
Western Prime Meat Processors' customers and food retailers have told them that traceability would be extremely beneficial, as consumers are becoming increasingly concerned with food safety. Livestock producers also liked the idea of receiving feedback/information on the animals they take to the plant. They feel they will be able to use the information they received to make improvements in their production and handling methods.

Western Prime Meat Processors recently installed a state-of-the-art traceback system, with some funding support from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food's Value Chain Program. While the system has many applications, one of its key features is the ability to trace co-mingled meat. In other words, it can trace meat products where various meat sources are used to make an end product, such as sausages and hamburger patties. Very few meat processors have this extensive traceback capability.

Now that the traceback system is in place, Western Prime Meat Processors is embarking on a marketing campaign aimed at creating awareness of this unique system. In addition, Western Prime Meat Processors is currently developing three new "natural" ingredient sausages, all of which will have complete traceability, including the spices used in the sausages.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Mike Guest, Managing Partner, Western Prime Meat Processors at 1-306-842-4448 or e-mail westernprimemeat@sasktel.net



Part of WPM's traceability system includes producing a label for the animal; handheld computers; a laptop; and an RF Reader.

How to Contact Us: Ask SAF

Do you have a question about the Environmental Farm Plan or the Farm Stewardship Program?

In the previous issue, we showed you how to search for information on the SAF website. What if the information isn't on the SAF website?

Well, you can always:

CONTACT US
On the right-hand side of SAF's website, click on Contact Us. A new page opens with four different ways to contact the department.

1. ASK SAF
The Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) is the primary contact for questions on agriculture topics from crops and livestock to nutrient management and the economic implications of management decisions. Using this form is one way to contact the AKC. If you click on the question or comment here link, a new page will open with a form called Ask SAF.

Fill out the form including your question, click SEND and the form will automatically be forwarded to the AKC. The AKC will contact you either by e-mail or telephone.

2. SAF OFFICE LOCATIONS
Are you wondering if a regional office is in your area? Do you need to contact a regional development team?

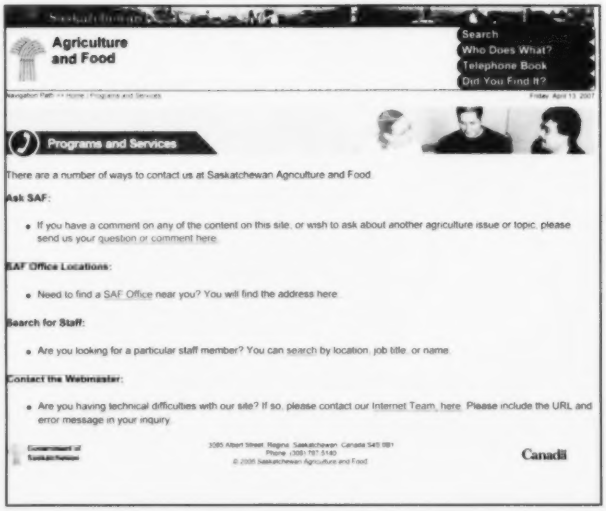
By clicking on SAF Office, the Office Locations page opens, which has the contact information for the Agriculture Knowledge Centre, regional offices and regional development teams in the province.

Also on the Office Locations page are short descriptions for each of the above contacts to assist you in choosing the appropriate office.

3. SEARCH FOR STAFF
Are you looking for a staff member or branch address?

SAF provides a Staff Search page listing the people who work in the department. By choosing search for staff, a new page will open, where you can search by first or last name, keyword, branch name or location.

4. CONTACT THE WEBMASTER
There is probably nothing more frustrating than clicking on a link and getting "Page Not Found." If you encounter this problem on SAF's website, please contact the webmaster by clicking on Internet Team from the Contact Us page. Your e-mail program opens, where you can explain the technical difficulty you are having. Include in the e-mail the page address (see image below) so our Internet Team can fix the problem as soon as possible.


Agriculture and Food
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Did You Find It?
Programs and Services
There are a number of ways to contact us at Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.
Ask SAF:
If you have a comment on any of the content on this site, or wish to ask about another agriculture issue or topic, please send us your question or comment here.
SAF Office Locations:
Need to find a SAF Office near you? You will find the address here.
Search for Staff:
Are you looking for a particular staff member? You can search by location, job title, or name.
Contact the Webmaster:
Are you having technical difficulties with our site? If so, please contact our Internet Team, here. Please include the URL and error message in your inquiry.

When you click on Contact Us from the main SAF site, a new web page opens with four different ways to contact the department.

In the next issue of Agriview, find out how to access Programs and Services that SAF provides, as well as agricultural programs offered by other Saskatchewan government departments and the federal government.

FORMULA REDUCES 2007 CROWN LAND RENTAL RATES

Crown land lessees can look forward to a decrease in their Crown land cultivation and grazing rental rates for 2007.

Cultivation rental rates will decrease by eight per cent compared to the 2006 rates, and 2007 grazing lease rates will decrease by 11 per cent compared to last year.

"We are giving producers advance notice of these changes so that they can budget more effectively, which should help in light of the challenges in the livestock industry at the moment," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said.

The formula used to calculate Crown land cultivation rental rates is sensitive to commodity prices and productivity. Rates change each year based on the commodity prices taken from the last complete crop year, and long-term yield data. A reduction in wheat, flax and canola prices in the 2005/06 crop year triggered the eight per cent decrease in cultivation rental rates.

The formula used to calculate grazing rental rates is sensitive to cattle prices. Rates change each year based on cattle prices from October and November of the previous year. The 11 per cent decrease reflects the decline in the price of cattle.

Both formulas have been in use, relatively unchanged, since the 1980s.

"The formulas used to determine rents on Crown land are commodity price sensitive," Wartman said. "This ensures that the rental rate remains at a fair level as commodity prices change from year to year."

FOR MORE INFORMATION
- Contact Al Syhlonyk, Director, SAF Lands Branch, at 306-787-5154.

EVENTS CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	PHONE	EMAIL / WEBPAGE
May 5	Saskatoon and Regina Farmers' Markets open	Regina, Saskatoon	306-949-8353 306-384-6262	www.reginafarmersmarket.ca www.saskatoonfarmersmarket.com
May 9	Stock Person's School	Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatoon	306-249-3227	
May 15 -16	Ag-West Bio Business Planning Workshop	Innovation Place, Saskatoon	306-668-2652	www.agwest.sk.ca
May 21	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance: Deadline to seed all classes of chickpeas	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	1-888-935-0000	www.saskcropinsurance.com
May 31	SCIC: Under the contract price option, deadline to provide contract information	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	1-888-935-0000	www.saskcropinsurance.com
June 4 - 6	Business Retention and Expansion International Conference	Regina	306-787-2201	www.brei.org
June 4 - 6	Food vs. Fuel: The Implications for Agricultural REsearch Policy	U of S Campus, Saskatoon	(306) 966-8419	www.kis.usask.ca/FoodvsFuel.html
June 10	CIC: Claims on extension deadline	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	1-888-935-0000	www.saskcropinsurance.com
June 10 - 14	Plant Canada 2007	Saskatoon	306-956-7260	www.plantcanada.ca/2007.htm
June 11	Business Plan Workshop, Module 3	Saskatoon	306-668-2652	www.agwest.sk.ca/events/businessevents.php
June 13	Livestock Emergency Response Course	Saskatoon	306-249-3227	facs@sasktel.net
June 13	2007 Saskatchewan Pasture School	Saskatoon	306-966-2148	jbruynooghe@saskforage.ca
June 20-22	Farm Progress Show	Regina	306-781-9219	www.wcfps.com
June 20	Native Prairie Appreciation	Cypress Hills	306-778-8294	www.pcap-sk.org/
June 23	Beef Development Centre Field Day	Termuende Research Farm, Lanigan	306-682-3139	bfreistadt@pami.ca

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is constantly updating the wealth of information it makes available to Saskatchewan residents.

You can download the most current version of any document posted on our website. You can also call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at **1-866-457-2377** to request a hard copy of many items.

Below is a list of the latest documents posted, as well as the most frequently visited pages, on SAF's website at: www.agr.gov.sk.ca.

EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

Agricultural Business Managers – A list of agencies that supply the various forms required when employing staff. Visit: Management | Skills and Training

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) PROCESS

Provides a co-ordinated and thorough review of the environmental issues associated with certain development proposals. Visit: Environment | Planning

SASKATCHEWAN ORGANIC INDUSTRY DIRECTORY

Profiles and promotes Saskatchewan's organic industry to an international audience. Visit: Organics | Processing

URBAN GUIDE TO WEED CONTROL

Provides general measures that can be applied to the control of many urban weed problems. Visit: Production | Weeds

CROWN LAND CATALOGUE SALES

Provides a listing of Crown land available for sale. Visit: About Us | Branches/Units | Lands

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Provides information on the decision-making process that uses all necessary techniques to suppress pests effectively, economically, and in an environmentally sound manner. Visit: Management | Skills and Training